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State Dept. and CIA 'Indulge Their Emptiness'

The following is excerpted from an April 19 speech by Sen. Malcolm Wallop (R., Wyo.) at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

The absence of intellectual and moral principles allows tastes and personal considerations to drive American officials into doing some awful things. Today they want to give military aid to the communist government of Mozambique to crush a democratic resistance. Today these officials aid Afghanistan's mujahedeen against the Soviets with the same conviction with which they aided the Kurds against Iraq. Today some of the highest officials in the CIA rejoice that they are finally rid of the burden of supplying arms to Nicaragua's contras. Indeed, for several years they have been discussing with lawmakers who share their tastes at what point they should be "dumped." It is no passion for the Sandinistas at CIA or State, just a dull desire to be rid of the arduous task of confronting

them, and to return to routine. Their "reputation," meaning their ease, represents a higher scale of values than their mission.

No wonder that such officials are uncomfortable discussing right and wrong, better and worse as though these terms mean something objectively. Thus last year the CIA refused my request to compile sets of unclassified biographies of the Sandinista leaders and of the contras because, responsible officials said, they did not want to be party to a debate about which side in that civil war is inherently preferable. So much for the words of Christ so proudly carved on the CIA's building: "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The biographies of the contras finally compiled, I put them into the Congressional Record. This year a few dedicated foreign-service officers expanded the set. But the State Department's Bureau of Public Affairs blocked their publication, until pressure

from the White House allowed it to proceed.

There is no reason for surprise here. If the contras are indeed "our brothers," as President Reagan said, if their cause is objectively better than that of their foes, then the duty we have in their regard is both clear and strict. After all is said and done, we simply cannot allow them to be crushed and the worse side to triumph. At last, then, if this be so, there is an objective standard against which the CIA's and the State Department's performance can be judged. That standard makes impossible accommodation with the Sandinistas. But that standard is inconvenient because living by it displeases friends of so many high officials.

For that reason, such officials describe the world as too complex to be painted black and white. Within a standardless spectrum of gray, they can indulge their emptiness. Another manifestation of this emptiness is the ability of so many high officials to give good causes their due in speech, but to betray them in action. Secretary of State George Shultz is as good an example as any of one who rejects the Brezhnev doctrine with eloquent words but has never been known to oppose it with any concrete actions. Such officials have learned from Helmut Sonnenfeldt's experience in 1976 that when their words reflect their de facto preference for accommodation with totalitarians, the American political system will produce a Ronald Reagan who will discredit them before the American people, and make it impossible for them to hold public office.

So they talk brave talk, formulate half-baked plans, and present them to the Congress in ways that subtly signal that they would not be so upset if the Congress disapproved. Thus they project upon the Congress and on the American people their own confusion and lethargy. Thus do they bring out the worst in the Congress. Regrettably, that is easy to do.